4:Altschuler E-5 (1959-1960) 1965
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CHAPTER V

LAND, PROPERTY AND INHERITANCE

Land is the basis of the Cayapa economy. The region, undefined and unsurveyed, has been deeded to the Cayapa as a tribe. Negroes and Whites who desire land must purchase it from an Indian in order to have a clear title. The title is for the land itself and not just for usufruct. The Cayapa may obtain land by cutting it out of the virgin forest (monte jivero), he may buy it or he may inherit it. More land is available for subsistence farming than for other purposes. For the cash crop of bananas the land must be of good quality, well drained, and within easy access of a navigable stream that flows into the main river body traveled by La Propaganda, the banana buyers. In addition, the grower must be able to meet the banana boat on schedule. A stand of rubber trees will also increase the value of the land. Rubber is sold in Colombia where, traditionally, the price is higher than in Ecuador and retail prices on consumer items wanted by the Cayapa are cheaper. Once a year, as a rule,

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Once a year, as a rule,

groups of Cayapa will band together for protection against the cutthroats and brigands that infest the coastal regions, load their canoes with as much rubber as they have been able to collect, and set off in small flotillas. Sometimes they are joined by a few Negroes. Bringing rubber into Colombia in this manner is illegal and it is also illegal to bring back Colombian goods into Ecuador. The Cayapa are very conscious of the illicit nature of the activity and the trip to them is a big adventure. Rubber is their only economic product that is of value in Colombia. The price varies from year to year, but generally fluctuates around the equivalent of thirty dollars U. S. per one hundred pounds. Unfortunately, rubber trees are subject to poaching.

If the land is sufficiently remote, it may be good for raising pigs. (Remoteness lessens the possibility of theft.) Fruit trees are very often planted by women when they marry. The most popular fruits are chirimoya, a kind of custard apple, oranges and sapotes. Large sections are planted to the tagua palm that, at one time, was as important economically as the banana is today. The tagua nut is only a minor item in the